

## SECTION: ARTICLES

# Cultural diversity and gender relations in an indigenous school in Mato Grosso do Sul (Brazil)<sup>1\*</sup>

Josiane Peres Gonçalves<sup>2</sup>Edicleia Lima de Oliveira<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

The correlations between gender, diversity and education are present in society and in school. In childhood education, in general, there are almost no male teachers, as the task is believed to be more appropriate for women. However, this view is different in some indigenous cultures, which has aroused the interest in understanding this reality. The aim of this study was to investigate the opinion of the school community of an indigenous village, located in the town of Tacuru (MS), about the work developed by indigenous male teachers in early childhood education. The field research is qualitative in nature and the data were collected by semi-structured interviews, initially conducted with four subjects: a teacher, a school manager, a child's mother (all of them indigenous), and one non-indigenous municipal manager. The results were transcribed, analyzed and named as primary data. This study also had the participation of a researcher of the indigenous culture who reported his opinion regarding the results obtained from the interviews of the first four participants. Such participation was termed secondary data. The findings show that, in the indigenous culture, children live in a community where everybody is a potential educator, regardless of gender, and the post of a teacher can be considered a prestigious position. In addition, for indigenous women, it is more difficult to leave the village in search of training, which may explain the significant male presence in early childhood education in the indigenous village at issue.

## Keywords

Diversity – Gender – Male Teachers – Indigenous culture.

**1-** Funded by Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico – CNPq.

**\*** Translated by Regina Célia Vieira. Contact: [regina\\_vieira\\_1@hotmail.com](mailto:regina_vieira_1@hotmail.com).

**2-** Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul Campus do Pantanal (CPAN/UFMS), Pantanal, MS, Brasil. Contact: [josiane.peres@ufms.br](mailto:josiane.peres@ufms.br).

**3-** Universidade Federal da Grande Dourados (UFGD), Grande Dourados, MS, Brasil. Contact: [edicleia.oli1@gmail.com](mailto:edicleia.oli1@gmail.com).



DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1678-4634201844185144>

This content is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type BY-NC.

## Introduction

Gender, diversity and education are topics that are intertwined at all times in the current moment, and the discussion and reflection of these issues are essential so as to understand how they influence the school environment and society.

Over time we have noticed that the discussion about diversity in education has gained considerable visibility. This is a very important issue, because it involves discussions about respect for differences of any kind. It should be remembered that, since each individual is characterized by its uniqueness and that the school, in turn, must take into account this dimension of human subjectivity in its decision-making and bureaucratic referrals, the discussion of diversity and otherness is presented as essential. (TOKAIRIN; SILVA, 2012, p. 75).

In relation to diversity, Oliveira (2008, p. 12230) states that “In terms of definition, diversity is the property of the person or of what is diverse; difference; inequality; variety; incoherence; opposition”. In addition, he suggests that the definition of the term allows affirming that cultural diversity should be understood, preferably, as an individual category.

We believe that, beyond grammar, the diversity issue must be understood as the combination of factors inherent to the person: family background, geographical and historical origin and external factors, especially the relation with the other. (OLIVEIRA, 2008, p. 12230).

For Candau and Koff (2006), diversity refers to the variety of cultures and cultural identities, opposite to equality, and can be understood today as a synonym for dialogue and shared values. In this perspective, the expression cultural diversity today is believed to include overcoming both the denial of differences effected by homogeneity and the relativism practiced by the absolutization of differences. The overcoming of these dichotomous visions must take place by means of policies that value the interaction and communication between the different subjects and cultural groups, without homogenizing or excluding cultures (CANDAU; KOFF, 2006).

Regarding school diversity and education, Corrêa (2008) points out that, within the concept of cultural diversity, there are minorities that have been silent and omitted from the school system for a long time, highlighting the different social classes, individuals with differentiated educational needs, sexual orientation, gender, religious choice, children, youth, adults, the elderly, among others.

The indigenous groups lie among the so-called minorities; however it is necessary to emphasize that there is not only one indigenous culture. Within the Brazilian territory, one can consider that there is a wide and varied number of indigenous cultures that are characterized by each people and each locality, and these groups are rich in details, beliefs, languages, diversity etc.

When we speak of Indians, we need to be aware that there is a great diversity of peoples, each one with their own culture, customs, beliefs, ways of living and conceiving the world. This

diversity imposes on us the need to deconstruct the idea of Indian generalized in the imaginary of the Brazilian population, in order to eliminate the misconception that “Indians are all the same”. (ZOIA; PERIPOLLI, 2010, p. 11).

On this basis, the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity, linked to the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), emphasizes that indigenous schools are considered intercultural places that debate and build knowledge, and understood as frontier schools where teaching and learning are related to the culture of each indigenous group. It claims that:

[...] indigenous school education emphatically problematizes the relationship between society, culture and school, re-associating school to all dimensions of social life and establishing new meanings and roles based on the specific interests and needs of each indigenous society. Thus, the indigenous school will be specific to each societal project, and differentiated from other schools, whether indigenous or non-indigenous. (BRASIL, 2007, p. 21).

Regarding the concept of gender, considered as a form of diversity, Nader (2014, p. 11-12) states:

Originated from Latin genus, the meaning of the term gender, among other synonyms, is the set of species or grouping of individuals, objects, facts, ideas that present a number of common characters, conventionally established. In the field of the human sciences, especially in the area of studies on women, the term gender was borrowed and designates the fundamentally social character of the distinctions based on sex, implying, therefore, the rejection of the biological determinism implicit in this category, and establishing the relational character of feminine and masculine identities. In other words, by representing the social aspect of the men/women relationship, gender is a concept different from the biological notion of sex.

Likewise, Scott (1998, p. 15) defines gender as “[...] the social organization of sexual difference. It does not reflect the first biological reality, but it builds the meaning of this reality”. Regarding gender identity, Passos, Rocha and Barreto (2011) argue that it derives from the way reality is presented to individuals, from the examples they have of the dominant culture, and from how they are seen and recognized. In these aspects, the education received makes all the difference.

However, gender identity is not confused with that of sex. While the latter occurs from the biological issue, the former is shaped from the conviction that one has to belong to a sex, which characterizes it as a cultural construction in which the biological aspect gains social meanings that define and delimit what being a man and being a woman are, their spaces and possibilities, as if this were normal and natural. (PASSOS; ROCHA, 2011, p. 51).

Taking for granted that gender identity is developed in childhood, it has been noticed that the children are going to school institutions earlier and earlier and spending

most of their time being cared by women, since there are practically no male teachers acting at this stage of education.

According to Araujo and Hammes (2012), there is still a vast implication with regard to the male teacher choosing to work with young children, especially in Early Childhood Education. This is because, in addition to “facing the fact that caring for children is a specifically feminine role, most times his sexual orientation is even placed under suspicion ...”. In addition, in some cases, male teachers feel uncomfortable as parents are worried about their children, for fear that they will suffer some kind of abuse; and this fact makes it increasingly difficult for male teachers to work at this stage of education. (ARAUJO; HAMMES, 2012, p. 8).

That is, at an important moment in the child's life, when an intense development process occurs, men have not followed and assisted the process of education of the new generations.

The presence of men in child education accounts for approximately 6% in Brazil. However, this theme is scarcely considered in studies. In our country, which has historically been constituted under the bonds of a paternalistic, slave-owning society, this is not considered important in the analyses. Thus, researchers in gender relations need to consider a fundamental question: who are the men who still work in the education of children, why and how do they work in a profession socially recognized as feminine? How, in their course of life, do the issues of race/ethnicity, gender and masculinity articulate? (EUGÊNIO, 2010, p. 2).

If, on the one hand, there is a clear lack of male teachers working with children, especially in early childhood education, in some indigenous cultures this reality appears to be different. Men participate more intensely in the education process in childhood, both in the family and in educational institutions.

It is worth remarking that, according to Buss-Simão (2009), the studies related to the anthropology of childhood have contributed to:

[...] the process of grasping the different ways of being a child, and even of ceasing to be a child in different contexts, trying to understand in depth the autonomous universes and the autonomy of the infantile world. (BUSS-SIMÃO, 2009, p. 5).

Thus, childhood should not be understood as a reflection of the adult world, but rather as a different universe, with its own specificities, and the adults are in charge of ensuring the education of children since the youngest age. In the case of some indigenous cultures, informal education occurs by means of a collective process.

[...] in an indigenous community, learning happens everywhere, and pedagogy is governed by the principle that everyone educates everyone. The educational process happens communally in the activities carried out in the village. The transmission of the people's traditional knowledge to future generations is a responsibility of the community. In this process, it is understood that the school is not the only space of transmission of knowledge, of learning. The community has

wisdom that needs to be socialized with the children, and the adults are responsible for the formation of the collective identity. (ZÓIA; PERIPOLLI, 2010, p. 14).

Thus, it is important to understand how gender relations manifest themselves, especially with regard to the work of male teachers with children in a context of diversity, as is the case of indigenous schools. This work aims to investigate the opinion of the school community of an indigenous village located in the interior of the State of Mato Grosso do Sul about the work developed by indigenous male teachers with children, highlighting the opinion of a researcher on the indigenous culture in the face of the results obtained.

## **Methodology**

For developing the research, the qualitative method was chosen as it provides a better and broader understanding of the subject investigated. Suassuna (2008, p. 348) emphasizes that qualitative research tries:

[...] not so much to quantify facts and phenomena, but to explain the meanderings of social relations, considering that human action closely depends on the meanings attributed to it by social actors.

The first stage of the field study was carried out with discussions held at the Research and Development Group on Gender and Education (GEPDGE) of the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul. Next, the conduction of interviews was chosen as a good device as:

The interview as data collection on a certain scientific theme is the most used technique in the fieldwork process. By means of this tool, researchers search for information, that is, for objective and subjective data. (BONI; QUARESMA, 2005, p. 72).

With support of these principles, semi-structured scripts were elaborated, comprehending the groups of subjects involved. The place to conduct the research was selected through telephone contacts addressed to the municipal offices of education of the State of Mato Grosso do Sul. However, it was remarkable the fact that a small number of municipalities counts with male teachers acting in early childhood education. The municipality of Tacuru, though, recorded the existence of an indigenous school where a male teacher has been in charge of a class for several years, thus arousing the interest to better understand this reality.

The research results are divided into primary and secondary data. The former was collected by means of interviews with four participants, all of whom taking part of the school community of the indigenous village: 1. Guarani: a teacher of child education with teacher training course, in charge of education for 16 years; 2. Tupi: a school manager with teacher training course and graduation in Geography, acting in education for 20 years; 3. Cambas: a municipal manager with graduation in Pedagogy, working in education for 5 years; and 4. Terena: a student's mother with incomplete high school, working as a school service agent.

The secondary data were obtained by means of a recorded interview with an indigenous culture researcher, who gave opinions about the data collected at the first stage. He is Professor Doctor Victor Ferri Mauro, identified in the study by his last surname (Mauro), who has a degree in Social Sciences, specialization in History and Culture of Indigenous Peoples, master's and doctorate in History.

Professor Mauro had access to the article containing the theoretical basis, the methodology and the primary results before his interview was recorded. After analyzing the secondary results (Professor Mauro's opinion), the final version of the study was sent back to him, and his name was then allowed to be divulged as he agreed with what was discussed in the article.

## **Results and discussions**

The results obtained with the field research are organized in two stages. The first one (primary data) analyzes the opinions of the male teacher, the managers and the student's mother about the work done by the male indigenous teacher in childhood education. The secondary data are composed of the opinion of an expert on indigenous issues about the results presented in the primary data. In the final considerations, all opinions will be related.

### **Primary data**

These data refer to the results of research carried out with a part of the school community of an indigenous village on the work developed by the indigenous male teacher in early childhood education. In this stage, a male teacher, a school manager and a child's mother, all indigenous citizens, are involved. In addition, the study also had the participation of a non-indigenous municipal manager.

"Which area? Childhood education? For the first time in my life I've seen a male teacher working with children" (TUPI). To begin with the discussions, the speech above refers to a Tupi's experience. However, this fact is part of the reality of most male teachers who choose to work with young children. It is becoming easier and easier to find research emphasizing the lack of male presence at this stage of basic education, considering the fact that women are seen as the ideal person to play this role.

According to Souza (2015), teaching in early childhood education, unlike other stages of education, had its beginning with the female image, keeping it up to the present day. Thus, women are those who have historically been in charge of educating and caring for children.

In this context, it must also be considered that there are many gender representations that have been engendered over time and that, although they can be questioned and modified from emerging paradigms in contemporary society, one cannot deny the historical force that this way of thinking may exert on the male presence in Early Childhood Education. (SOUZA, 2015, p. 3).

Having worked in the educational area for 16 years, Guarani was inserted in a reality different from that previously presented. When asked about his relationship with the other employees of the institution, he reported facing no problem because the context of the village is different from that of other schools in the state.

Well, I get along with them very well, I think it's because we are acquainted. I was automatically given a post as a child educator and this experience I always pass on to them: how I learn and how children learn. (GUARANI).

In our culture, a man in charge of child education does not seem to make sense, but in some indigenous cultures, having a professional working in this educational phase is seen as natural and, in some cases, preferable.

Well, I think even kids like a male teacher. Another thing: even by life experience, I also know that here in our reality, men can control the class in a more efficient way. The children [... you know, at school, when you work, you have to master the class; and the men here, I can see, have more power. In our indigenous culture, the most dominant figure is the father, not the mother. (TUPI).

The class control imposed by the male teacher is a continuation of what occurs in the indigenous Guarani village, where man holds power and gender relations are unequal.

The situation of Guarani women does not differ much from the situation of women in our culture; their female universe is large, rich and complex, there are situations of autonomy and limits in their daily life, they are inserted into a culture in which power, in the vast majority of times, lies in the men's hands. (ALVES, 2011, p. 364).

From this point of view, it is worth pointing out, according to the presuppositions of Alves and Medeiros (2016), that the indigenous men who teach in their communities, for the most part, consider themselves warriors, taking into account the remarkable past of their peoples, who fought fearlessly against their enemies. In this perspective, the struggle in the present time is related to the defense of the cultural, social and historical patrimony of their peoples. Therefore, only a well-prepared warrior could fight to preserve these traits. In this context, the female figure keeps a low profile, which allows us to affirm that there is a difference between the roles played by men and women in the indigenous scenario.

These male teachers suggest that their new arrows – hunting and defense instrument – are the knowledge acquired in their training processes, with women having a minimal participation in this process, since warfare in many cultures is a masculine issue. In denying, in a certain way, the participation of women in the processes of transformation, the indigenous male teachers maybe “curb” female participation in some leadership processes. (ALVES; MEDEIROS, 2016, p. 264).

When referring to the acceptance of the school community of the work performed by the male indigenous teacher, Cambas mentioned that, in the previous year, the teacher used to work only part time, but the acceptance was so good that he started working full time:



[...] this year he worked with two groups, one in the morning and another in the afternoon... because of the good acceptance and the successful learning. So if he's in preschool today with two classes, it's due to recognition for his work. (CAMBAS).

In contrast to this reality, in our culture, male teachers have to face a series of obstacles regarding their work with children in early childhood education, as reported in a survey conducted in another county of Mato Grosso do Sul, conducted by Araujo and Hammes (2012), in which the authors emphasize that:

Subject "D" (2011) also states that early childhood education is not a place for men. "I can't see men in kindergarten, giving lessons to third or fourth graders... not to small children. It's odd for men to work in early childhood education, there's no place for them". Subject "F" (2011), even recognizing that "the male presence in the nursery is not at all inappropriate, says that it is disturbing to see a man in direct contact with the children". (ARAUJO, HAMMES, 2012, p.16).

When asked if there was any estrangement or discrimination of the school community as to the fact that he was a man working with children, Guarani argues that:

I don't think so. Not here in the village, but in the city it certainly exists. People always ask, "But do you work with children?" "Yes, I do!" "Do you work in childhood education?" "Yes, I do!" Many times, for them.... I don't know how it works in the city, but in the preschool, they [teachers] are probably responsible for taking the children to the restroom. Here we don't do that, right? Indigenous children are different, right? Because in fact, generally, this is a kind of work that only women do. They [indigenous people] think so, right? I believe so, because that is a woman's responsibility, right? (GUARANI).

In compliance with those reports, Prates (2008) emphasizes that the care given to Guarani children, including in relation to health, is a responsibility of the woman, who has learned to play this role since childhood, as "[...] the girls care for the young children at an early age, helping their mothers and female relatives in household chores." (PRATES, 2008, p. 6).

As noted by Teacher Guarani's report, indigenous children only start attending school after they are four years old, when they no longer need the care exclusively attributed to women in the Guarani village. Thus, the childhood teacher can take on teaching activities and, perhaps for this reason, there is no rejection by the school community: he is in charge of instruction only, without having to take care of the children's basic needs.

Another relevant fact that influences the largest number of male teachers working with children in the indigenous village may be related to training, as Tupi points out:

I'm going to talk about our reality. There are myself, Guarani, and about five other teachers... Because we... the difficulty was too great for us to study, to get a higher education, to go to the highway, to reach..., because there was an old road, far away [...].



These conditions hindered the entry of indigenous women into the university, so that those who were able to leave the village and search for training were the men. Tupi argues that there were only two women attending the course of Pedagogy, and states:

So... that's why some of us have higher education and there was that priority of those who were already trained, to work with children and, because of this, there are several men working.

Another question posed to the participants addressed the reduced number of male teachers working in early childhood education. The most remarkable answer was related to the salary issue.

I believe it's really a matter of remuneration. Today, being a teacher doesn't provide..., you can't have a promising career or something like that. The teacher's career today is... linear, it doesn't offer opportunities, right? (CAMBAS).

When we questioned and presented the possibility of a salary rise, in an attempt to make men have more interest in the teaching profession, Cambas explained:

Look, I don't believe this is the only problem. Because early childhood education requires a lot of patience, right? The children are young ... There are people.... because in fact, the profession is chosen by one's own profile. And I believe there would be few, few men that have an affinity for small children, because they require a lot of patience, a lot of commitment.

Sharing the same opinion, Guarani states:

I believe it's because they don't know the children, I believe they don't want to learn with a child, they don't respect the child. I won't say it's because it's very difficult to control a class, but they do believe it's a woman's stuff.

Concerning the same issue, Dias; Xavier (2013, p.107) make another approach:

[...] associated with the low status of the profession, perhaps because of this, there is a preference for men to act as a coordinator or a manager, it is as if this place of power and prominence were natural and legitimate to men.

Even considering these concepts, the reality in the indigenous village at issue is portrayed differently; a considerable aspect can be seen by Tupi's speech: "That's why, I see today in our reality, the child is always more respectful towards a man." In this indigenous village, it is the father that educates the child at home, while the mother is responsible for the care, hygiene and feeding. Accordingly, the father is the partner responsible for education concerning:

Studying, respecting older people, telling ancient stories, explaining how it will be in the future ... this is up to the fathers. For when they [the indigenous children] come to school, they may respect the teacher, the mates..., all this is up to the father. (TUPI).

Corroborating these ideas, Alves (2011, 364) claims:

The daily life of the Guarani woman is full of activities such as: caring for the family, which means caring for the children, preparing food, producing subsistence food, most of the time together with the companion, and doing household chores. The harmony of family and community life is everyone's responsibility. The well-being of the group is not only individual, but also collective.

In this cultural context, where caring is women's responsibility and education for life is a collective responsibility or, as a matter of priority, a masculine role (according to Tupi's reports), it is possible to affirm that having men act as teachers of children over four years old, in a Guarani village, can be considered an extension of the existing educational work in families. Such situation cannot be seen in our culture, because, historically, it is the woman that cares for, educates and teaches the children; she is the one in charge of all the tasks related to care and education of children, especially in early childhood education. It is considered that:

[...] the care and education of young children have been widespread as a prerogative of women. This is either because we live with more biologically related conceptions, with a strong appeal to reproduction and motherhood, or because, even in some cases, the theoretical framework comes from a more culturalistic perspective focused on a political defense of care as "a female labor" – a historical conquest of women. (SAYÃO, 2012, p. 152).

Consequently, we can find an increasing number of women and not many men working as teachers in early childhood education. In view of this, the few of them who risk taking part of this level of instruction face difficulties and prejudice, because the woman is pointed out as the perfect person for performing tasks associated with caring and educating. "And even because, historically, being a teacher is a woman's issue, right?" (CAMBAS).

Cambas' account refers to a number of issues, for example, the reason why a significant number of male teachers work in the village. This fact can be explained by the indigenous way of life, since the way of sustenance has changed over time: "[...] here in reality, you know, today, until last year the people went to the mill to cut sugar cane, but today, this year, most of them remained in the village; they have been planting" (TUPI).

Therefore, taking a higher education course, in this case, a teacher training, turns out to be a new livelihood opportunity, a way to improve financial condition and provide professional achievement without having to leave the village. Januário (2002) points out that:

Through the Indian-designed undergraduate courses, indigenous teachers will be instrumented so that they hence can meet the knowledge they consider important in their lives.

In this perspective, Tupi states:

Today, we... for example, we here in the village... the teacher takes Pedagogy, there are about 15 teachers who are majoring in Pedagogy. So, they show interest in working in education because, for example, there are the BNDES's laws that say that, from elementary school through 5th grade in indigenous education, it is the native that has to teach the children. He has the right to work because he speaks the language. These are our rights, in fact. So here we are working with 62 mixed teachers [indigenous and non-indigenous], [...] I see that way. I don't know why the teacher in the city doesn't want to major in Pedagogy, why he isn't interested in working in Early Childhood Education.

This situation, however, does not exist in the non-indigenous culture, since men are rarely seen as child teachers, because of the society's representations that the woman is better suited to the role. These representations have a direct influence on the small number of male professionals working with children in education.

As we live in a patriarchal and sexist society and such a model creates consensual representations about the naturalization of male domination, we can relate this form of social hierarchy, created from gender stereotypes, with the structuring of inequality and the different forms of expression of gender violence in society. Inequalities occur in a variety of ways, in the separation of spaces, in the destination of professions, in school practices, among others. (LANGAMER, TIMM, 2013, p. 24719).

In this context, female professionals can be seen in nurseries and schools whereas males can barely be found. However, as reported in the course of this study, it is possible to find a satisfactory amount of male teachers working with small children in an indigenous school located in a town of Mato Grosso do Sul. In one of his lines, Guarani states that the number of male teachers should be larger:

I believe it has to increase, the job doesn't fit only women. For example, I like to cook a lot, but I don't like to do the dishes. This responsibility can't fall on women only, I believe that men also have to do it. They also have to like the profession [teaching] especially in early childhood education, they have to like in order to share responsibility. (GUARANI).

The work of these professionals is so well seen by the indigenous community that the families prefer to have their children taught by them:

They always talk about him, that he's a good teacher. They say that when they [the children] leave, they already know some things, the direction, the letters he already knows, they write their names... If I could I would like to have him (the son) taught by him till the end, till he grows old, you know? (TERENA).

In this scenario, the indigenous teacher reports that the parents take into account the teacher's experience:

My children already know how to write their names, and the parents come here and say: "Next year my son will study with you, I want him with you". That is, they see the experience of each teacher. [...] last year I even got surprised, there was a talkative child and his mother came and spoke to me: "I want to send my son for you to care!" She came as simple as that and said so. I told her that I wanted so, but I couldn't, because the child wasn't four years old yet, the boy wasn't enrolled yet. She [mother] said she wanted me to take care of her son and I said, "No, I can't accept this, I have responsibility with the students who are already enrolled". (GUARANI).

It is well known that, in the indigenous culture at issue, the work of the male teacher is very well regarded and accepted by the community. The great concern is in relation to the training of these professionals, regardless of gender. For male teachers in this indigenous community, teaching is a way of guaranteeing sustenance and professional achievement, different from what occurs in our culture:

The teaching dedicated to childhood is a professional area that illustrates the segmentation resulting from this perspective of the sexual division of labor, the work of women associated with the reproductive sphere, and that of men, to the productive one. The education of young children is associated with the scope of domestic work and the reproductive sphere, and is thus naturalized as an area of female performance. (MONTEIRO; ALTMANN, 2014, p. 723).

It is evident that the work of the male teacher in early childhood education arouses many opinions; however, whichever culture, regardless of the teacher gender, the work developed by these professionals must be respected.

## **Secondary data**

These data refer to the results of the interview conducted with Professor Victor Ferri Mauro, an indigenous culture researcher who gave opinions on the primary data obtained through interviews with the school manager, the teacher, the mother of a student in the indigenous village, and a non-indigenous municipal manager.

"The position of a teacher is considered very prestigious in an indigenous community." When asked why there are so many men working in children's education in the village, Mauro argues that a post of teacher within the indigenous community can be considered prestigious, taking into account that most of them have low professional training and that a teacher's job is one of the best paid work one could expect. Thus, being graduated, indigenous teachers can continue living in their communities, with their families, without having to leave in search of work. In this regard, the interviewee emphasizes that:

[...] there are not many people trained to have jobs that are financially rewarding in society, an agronomist, a civil engineer, a doctor... I think that a large part, perhaps most of the natives who manage to take a course at the university, opt for either education or health areas. Some of them are able to invest in posts such as health workers or nursing assistants. I know people who have finished higher education, for example, nurses, but I think that the skilled workforce at a higher level falls mostly on the teacher training area. (MAURO).

When referring to these aspects, a very interesting fact is presented, since both professions – a teacher's and of those related of health and social assistance – are, in our culture, considered feminine as they deal with care, which is usually associated with a woman's role. However, in some indigenous cultures, this reality is different.

For Macedo Filho (2015), the issues of caring for in our patriarchal society are in charge of women: the constant maintenance of life, the care-taking of their homes, family members, children and domestic activities. Besides that, this care also extends to the public space, when women embrace the practice of caring for neighbors and friends, and also get jobs in schools and day-care centers (school cooks, teachers), restaurants (cooks, waitresses), churches (nuns), health services (nurses, social workers etc.) (MACEDO FILHO, 2015, p. 85).

Another supposed explanation for the strong masculine presence in the children's education in the village, according to the researcher, is that, in the indigenous society, men have a more active political participation. In spite of some female participation, the male teacher has a considerable power of political influence within his community, and is regarded as an authority. Therefore, perhaps because men have more space in this sphere, they predominate in the post of teachers, as it is one of the few remunerated jobs within the village.

The teacher's salary, though considered low in our society, when compared to the purchasing power within indigenous villages, is very good; it is a very prestigious post. (MAURO).

In opposition to this idea, in our culture,

Low wages and low social status still prevent men from joining the profession of early school educators; this also reflects the social context in which men are inserted, where they are expected to be home providers, which turns to be difficult with the remuneration paid to these workers. The devaluation of the teaching profession is enhanced at the moment when women begin to occupy this space; as their salaries were not the only resource for the family to survive, there was no need to pay them well. (HENTGES; JAEGER, 2013, p. 3).

Another question posed to the researcher was about the training since a supposed explanation of the predominantly masculine presence in early childhood education is that the man has more opportunity to leave the village to study.

It may have influence because perhaps they have easier access according to the community's own internal relationships. They can leave their children with their wives, and then feel free to

go to the city, even to spend the night. For example, there are the Ará Verá teacher trainings, continuing education and high school courses, offered only in Dourados. For more than ten years, indigenous teachers have been taken to the city to study, sometimes for 10 days in a row, maybe more. There is also the Teko Arandu, which is a higher level course, the indigenous intercultural teaching course, which is also offered in stages. I also see many women engaged in these activities, sometimes they are female teachers, married with teachers and the couple attends the training together. (MAURO).

On the other hand, he says the explanation may be related to the Guarani culture, according to which it is very common for a woman to have a more reserved social life at home. They rarely go to the city and some of them have difficulties speaking Portuguese. Men, in general, are more fluent, in addition to the fact that many have the habit of leaving the village to stay periods off:

[...] in the shacks of the sugarcane plant, working in the cutting; this is a hypothesis that could be investigated, I can't say for sure, but we can start from this presupposition, to see whether it is confirmed. (MAURO).

Consequently, men are favored to leave for the city, to stay away from the village for a longer period of time, to study, to start university, and eventually to have more acceptance of their community. In the case of women, it would be more difficult as:

[...] indigenous women marry and have children earlier than their non-indigenous counterparts, and these factors make it difficult for them to attend a course in the urban area. (MAURO).

Alves (2011) also mentions that Guarani women marry early, after a period of dating with discreet encounters. Marriage is monogamous, and she is expected to become a mother soon because "[...] female sterility is regarded as punishment... for something wrong the woman has done" (ALVES, 2011, p. 366).

Committing to marriage and early motherhood justifies their difficulty in leaving the villages to attend higher education in the city. Without training, it becomes more difficult for them to play the role of a teacher, and this is possibly one of the reasons why there are more male teachers in the indigenous village at issue.

When asked about the changes that have been taking place in the indigenous culture as a result of the modern times, the Dr. Mauro argues that all cultures change over time by the influence of several factors. In addition,

[...] I see the political engagement around the territorial claim, this is often emphasized in the teaching of adults towards children, and of adults towards young people. I see that in discussing the internal problems of indigenous communities, in the problems that concern them, in guaranteeing the rights that the constitution extends to the Indians, these communities are much more politicized than the young people of the city, even the most educated. They [indigenous people] very often discuss domestic and foreign policy issues.

So I think like this: the future will reveal a reality very different from today's, but not necessarily an extinction of that feeling of being differentiated, a loyalty to its tradition, its ancestors. I don't see that there will be an abandonment of the language in the short term, but it will certainly intensify the interaction with the non-Indians. You can be sure that there will be more and more indigenous people attending schools, universities, getting jobs in the city... because in the village there are not many alternatives for employment. Then it will happen. (MAURO).

In general, the researcher points some possibilities of the presence of the male teacher acting in the childhood education in the village, demonstrating that the primary and the secondary data are in agreement. It is evident that the presence of these professionals in this stage of basic education, different from the non-indigenous culture, is viewed positively by the community as a whole.

In this context, the teaching job, within the village, represents a position of prestige and a possibility to guarantee the income and sustenance of the family, without having to leave the environment in which they are inserted. However, it should be observed that there is not only one type of indigenous culture; there are several, and each one presents its specificities. Therefore, the results may vary from culture to culture.

## **Final considerations**

This study aimed to investigate the opinion of the school community of an indigenous village located in Tacuru (MS) on the work developed by indigenous male teachers with children in the Early Childhood Education. The primary data revealed that the work developed by male teachers is welcomed and accepted by the community, and most families choose to have these professionals caring for their children.

The most remarkable concern is related to training, which does not depend on gender. In addition, for many indigenous people, teaching is a way of guaranteeing sustenance without having to leave the village. Another relevant aspect is that, in this culture, the men are the ones who educate children; and women are responsible only for caring. This is something that does not occur in today's Western society, because, in the dominant culture, women are responsible for both caring for and educating the children.

When analyzing the secondary data, the researcher's statements make it clear that we still have a reality of a few indigenous people taking higher education, and among these few, most choose to take teaching courses or health-related trainings. Another supposed explanation for the satisfactory number of indigenous teachers working in early childhood education in the community may be related to the fact that, for indigenous women, it is more difficult to leave the village in search of training, since these courses are generally offered outside the community, requiring some time out-of-home. Moreover, most indigenous women make family early, which hinders their presence in the educational activities of the community.

It should be noted that both primary and secondary data make it clear that the role of educator represented by men within the indigenous community, and the teaching



profession understood as a position of prestige are factors that allow us to rethink the concepts about teaching in early childhood education. This is because the hegemonic culture does not accept that men act in the education of children, a fact that may seem out of place for many, but the culture investigated does give preference to these professionals.

However, everything can vary according to the social representations of each group, depending on the culture in which the individuals are inserted. With regard to male teachers, it is necessary to break the barriers and consider that, regardless of gender, what is important is to do a good job, offering them a critical quality training.

## References

ALVES, Luiz Alberto Sousa. Ser índia e mulher, vivendo na terra má: uma reflexão sobre a questão de gênero indígena. In: CONGRESSO DE TEOLOGIA DA PUCPR, 10, 2011, Curitiba. **Anais eletrônicos...** Curitiba: Champagnat, 2011. p. 363-370.

ALVES, Maria Isabel Alonso; MEDEIROS, Heitor Queiroz de. Gênero e educação em contextos indígenas na Amazônia: as relações que constituem a produção identitária das mulheres professoras Arara-Karo do Estado de Rondônia. **Interações**, Campo Grande, v. 17, n. 2, p. 257-266, abr./jun. 2016.

ARAUJO, Messias Pereira; HAMMES, Care Cristiane. A androfobia na educação infantil. **Interfaces da Educação**, Paranaíba, v. 3, n. 7, p. 5-20, 2012.

BONI, Valdete; QUARESMA, Sílvia Jurema. Aprendendo a entrevistar: como fazer entrevistas em ciências sociais. **Revista Eletrônica dos Pós-Graduandos em Sociologia Política**, Florianópolis, v. 2, n. 1 (3), p. 68-80, jan./jul. 2005.

BRASIL. Secretaria de Educação Continuada, Alfabetização e Diversidade. **Educação escolar indígena: diversidade sociocultural indígena ressignificando a escola**. Brasília, DF: Secad, 2007. (Cadernos Secad; abril 2017).

BUSS-SIMÃO, Márcia. Antropologia da criança: uma revisão da literatura de um campo em construção. **Revista Teias**, Rio de Janeiro, v. 10, n. 20, p. 1-16, 2009.

CANDAU, Vera Maria; KOFF, Adélia Maria Nehme Simão. Didática e perspectiva multi/intercultural dialogando com protagonistas do campo. **Educação & Sociedade**, Campinas, v. 27, n. 95, p. 471-493, maio/ago. 2006.

CORRÊA, Roberto Lobato. **Cultura e diversidade**. Curitiba: Ibepec, 2008.

DIAS, Alfrancio Ferreira; XAVIER, Antonio Jeferson. A ausência de educadores do sexo masculino nas creches da cidade de Jequié. **Saberes em Perspectiva**, Jequié, v. 3, n. 5, p. 103-115, jan./set. 2013.

EUGÊNIO, Benedito Gonçalves. Narrativas de professores homens no magistério dos anos iniciais do ensino fundamental. In: FAZENDO GÊNERO, 9., 2010, Florianópolis, 2010, **Anais....**: diásporas, diversidades, deslocamentos. Florianópolis: UFSC, 2010. p. 1-9.

HENTGES, Karine Jacques; JAEGER, Angelita Alice. **Relações de gênero, masculinidade e docência masculina**. 2013. Monografia (Especialização em Movimento Humano, Sociedade e Cultura) – Centro de Educação Física e Desporto da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria. Porto Alegre: UFSM, 2013.

JANUÁRIO, Elias. Ensino superior para índios: um novo paradigma na educação. **Cadernos de Educação Escolar Indígena - 3º Grau Indígena**, Barra do Bugres, v. 1, n. 1, p. 15-24, 2002.

LANGAMER, Stefany Ferreira; TIMM, Flávia Bascunan. Representações sociais de gênero em crianças: uma experiência no ensino fundamental. In: CONGRESSO NACIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO (EDUCERE), 11., 2013, Curitiba. **Anais...** Curitiba: PUCPR, 2013. p. 24718-24734.

MACEDO FILHO, Roberto. Cuidado. In: FLEURY-TEIXEIRA, Elizabeth Maria; MENEGHEL, Stela Nazareth (Org.). **Dicionário feminino da infâmia: acolhimento e diagnóstico de mulheres em situação de violência**. Rio de Janeiro: Fiocruz, 2015. p. 84-86.

MONTEIRO, Mariana Kubilius; ALTMANN, Helena. Homens na educação infantil: olhares de suspeita e tentativas de segregação. **Cadernos de Pesquisa**, São Paulo, v. 44, n. 153, p. 720-741, 2014.

NADER, Maria Beatriz. Gênero e sexualidade. In: NADER, Maria Beatriz; RANGEL, Livia de Azevedo Silveira (Org.). **Mulher e gênero em debate: representações, poder e ideologia**. Vitória: Edufes, 2014. p. 11-15.

OLIVEIRA, Camila Alberto Vicente de. O conceito de diversidade cultural e suas implicações para a formação do professor de matemática no interior de Mato Grosso: estudo de caso com licenciados em matemática na Unemat - Barra do Bugres - MT. In: CONGRESSO NACIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO (EDUCERE), 7., 2008 e CONGRESSO IBERO-AMERICANO SOBRE VIOLÊNCIA NAS ESCOLAS (CIAVE), 3., 2008, Curitiba. **Anais...** Curitiba: PUCPR, 2008. p. 12228-12234.

PASSOS, Elizete; ROCHA, Nívea; BARRETO, Maribel. Gênero e educação. In: COSTA, Ana Alice Alcantara; RODRIGUES, Alexnaldo Teixeira; VANIN, Iole Macedo (Org.). **Ensino e gênero: perspectivas transversais**. Salvador: UFBA, 2011. p. 49-60.

PRATES, Maria Paula. Corporalidade e gênero: reflexões possíveis sobre mulheres e crianças Mbyá-Guarani. REUNIÃO BRASILEIRA DE ANTROPOLOGIA, 26., 2008, Porto Seguro. **Anais...** Porto Seguro: ABA, 2008. Disponível em: <[http://www.abant.org.br/conteudo/ANAIS/CD\\_Virtual\\_26\\_RBA/grupos\\_de\\_trabalho/trabalhos/GT%2014/maria%20paula%20prates.pdf](http://www.abant.org.br/conteudo/ANAIS/CD_Virtual_26_RBA/grupos_de_trabalho/trabalhos/GT%2014/maria%20paula%20prates.pdf)>. Acesso em: 27 nov. 2017.

SAYÃO, Deborah Thomé. **Relações de gênero e trabalho docente na educação infantil: um estudo de professores em creche**. 2005. 263 f. Tese (Doutorado em Educação) – Centro de Ciências da Educação da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, 2005.

SCOTT, Joan. Gênero: uma categoria útil de análise histórica. **Educação e Realidade**, Porto Alegre, v. 2, n. 20, p. 71-99, jul./dez, 1998.

SOUZA, José Edilmar de. Homem docência com crianças pequenas: um olhar das crianças de um centro de educação infantil. REUNIÃO NACIONAL DA ANPED, 37., 2015, Florianópolis. **Anais...** Florianópolis: UFSC, 2015. p. 1-17.

SUASSUNA, Livia. Pesquisa qualitativa em educação e linguagem: histórico e validação do paradigma indiciário. **Perspectiva**, Florianópolis, v. 26, n. 1, p. 341-377, jan./jun. 2008.

TOKAIRIN; Cristiane de Oliveira; SILVA; Grazielle Cristina. Diversidade e a construção social da escola. In: SEMANA DA EDUCAÇÃO DA UEL, 14., 2012, Londrina. **Anais...**: Pedagogia 50 anos: da Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras da Universidade Estadual de Londrina. Londrina: UEL, 2012. p. 75-89.

ZÓIA, Alceu; PERIPOLLI, Odimar J. Infância indígena e outras infâncias. **Espaço Ameríndio**, Porto Alegre, v. 4, n. 2, p. 9-24, jul./dez. 2010. Disponível em: <<http://www.seer.ufrgs.br/index.php/EspacoAmerindio/article/view/12647/10473>>. Acesso em: 11 nov. 2016.

*Received on September 10th, 2017*

*Modified on November 16th, 2017*

*Approved on December 18th, 2017*

**Josiane Peres Gonçalves** is a PHD in Education by the Pontifícia Universidade Católica of Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS). She is a lecturer at the Education Post-graduation Program of the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, Pantanal Campus (CPAN/UFMS) and of Program of the Faculty of Education (FAED/UFMS). Leader of the Group of Studies and Research on Development, Gender and Education (GEPDGE).

**Edicleia Lima de Oliveira** is an Education Master student at the Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD); graduated in Pedagogy for the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, Naviraí Campus (UFMS/CPNV). She worked as a scholarship holder PIBIC/CNPq for two years during the graduation period.